

## BOOKS AND THEIR WRITERS.

I MENTIONED in my notes in the July number of THE CHURCHMAN one of the books issued in connection with the observance of the Bunyan Tercentenary—Archdeacon Buckland's interesting account of Bunyan's Life and Work. As the actual date of the commemoration will be in November, and probably a number of my readers may be preparing to deliver addresses or sermons on the occasion, it may be useful to draw attention to some other books on the subject. The best known authorities on Bunyan are George Offor and Dr. John Brown. Those who require merely a brief sketch of his life will find all they need in Dr. Brown's article in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, or in the somewhat fuller outline in *Chambers' Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (vol. I, p. 719). Southey's Edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress* with a Life of John Bunyan is well known from Lord Macaulay's famous essay on it. There are also a number of well-known sermons and addresses dealing with the characters and incidents in Bunyan's works which will provide fruitful suggestions. A useful study of Bunyan, mainly on the literary side, is James Anthony Froude's volume in Macmillan's "English Men of Letters" Series. He bears strong testimony to the influence which Bunyan has exerted on religious life and thought. He speaks, for example, of Bunyan as the man "whose writings have for two centuries affected the spiritual opinions of the English race in every part of the world more powerfully than any book or books except the Bible." Of *The Pilgrim's Progress* he says: "This book is wrought into the mind and memory of every well-conditioned English or American child, while the matured man, furnished with all the knowledge which literature can teach him, still finds the adventures of Christian as charming as the adventures of Ulysses or Aeneas. He sees there the reflection of himself, the familiar features of his own nature, which remains the same from era to era. Time cannot impair its interest, or intellectual progress make it cease to be true to experience."

---

Of books on Bunyan recently issued, one of special interest is *John Bunyan*, by R. H. Coats, M.A., External Lecturer in English Literature, University of Birmingham (Student Christian Movement, 2s. 6d. net). Mr. Coats leaves on the reader the impression that to write of Bunyan is a real joy to him. He has entered into the spirit of the Puritan so thoroughly and sympathetically that at times he may appear a little biased against the Royalists and the Church party; but much may be forgiven in this respect, for no one can be proud of the attitude of the Churchpeople of the time, although every allowance must be made for the heat of reaction after a period of humiliation. We can well sympathize with those who feel indignation at the treatment which Bunyan received. I have heard a well-known Churchman say more than once that

his blood boils every time he thinks of Bunyan's twelve years' imprisonment—spent during the prime of his manhood. The six chapters of Mr. Coats' book have suggestive titles: "Brazier of Bedford," "Wrestler with God," "Pastor and Preacher," "Dreamer of Dreams," "Writer of Books" and "Then and Now." These provide in themselves an indication of Bunyan's career. Mr. Coats points out an unusual quality in Bunyan's work as a writer: "Jesus of Nazareth, besides being much else, was the supreme allegorist of human history. Spiritual truth lurked everywhere around Him in the homeliest and most familiar guise. It was impossible for Him to watch the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, or to notice the sower casting seed into the ground, or the fisherman hauling in his nets, without discerning a deeper significance in all these things. It is not too much to say that no one has ever entered into this aspect of the mind of Christ more fully than John Bunyan. To him also it came as a kind of second nature to speak the truth in parables." This is one of many delightful touches in this book. He notices also Bunyan's knowledge and use of the Bible and shows how wide and accurate it was. He quotes the testimony of many authorities on the various aspects of Bunyan's writings. Coleridge, for example, knew "of no book he could so safely recommend as *The Pilgrim's Progress* for teaching and enforcing the whole saving truth according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus." The closing chapter provides a contrast between the characteristics of the thought of Bunyan's day and of our own time. Whatever changes there are, "Bunyan has rendered this incomparable service to all benighted travellers through the darkness of this world, that he has made shinningly clear to them the way that is called the Way of Holiness."

Quite a different impression is left by the Dean of Winchester's book on Bunyan in the People's Library (*John Bunyan*, by W. H. Hutton, D.D., Dean of Winchester: Hodder and Stoughton, 2s. 6d. net). It is not, I hope, unfair to this volume to say that its general tone suggests that its appearance is due to the desire of an enterprising publisher to add to a series of cheap books one on a subject of current interest and that in the choice of an author he was influenced more by the reputation of the writer than by any special interest he had in the subject. Dr. Hutton's attitude towards Bunyan and those associated with him is almost entirely unsympathetic throughout. He is an ardent apologist for the Royalists and the Church party, and everything that can be said in defence of their treatment of the Puritan pastor is carefully put forward. Bunyan himself is described as "an inspired yet ignorant and prejudiced tinker." Some of his religious experiences are accounted for thus: "So strong is the power of the human imagination that he who seriously expects to see miracles does not long expect them in vain." Occasionally a good word is spared for him, thus: "Indeed, Bunyan as a man seems to have been, as one might fancy from the cheery tone of his most famous books, a popular personage. Hardly

ever do his enemies (excepting the opposing sect) throw a hard word at him." Every excuse is made for the magistrates who had to try him. They treated him with great leniency. It was Bunyan's own fault that he would not accede to the devices they contrived to save him from punishment. The latent hostility to the Puritan is seen in many passages. For instance, what is the meaning of the sentence, "Bunyan the writer is immortal, Bunyan the man only memorable"? Substitute for Bunyan's name that of any great writer, such as Shakespeare, Milton, or Coleridge, and what meaning would the criticism have?

But Bunyan was a Puritan preacher, and his life and work in that capacity are to be disparaged as far as possible, while the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* must be grudgingly admitted to the ranks of genius, in spite of the unfortunate fact that he was a Puritan leader. Here is another instance in which the writer's bias is displayed. Do we, he asks, "delight in Bunyan's Christian because he is selfish and wishes only to save his own soul"? This is manifestly unfair to Christian, as every unbiased reader can see from reading of his efforts to induce the people of the City of Destruction to accompany him. Are we to assume that he should have remained in that city rather than set out because he could find no one to accompany him but Pliable? It gives, however, opportunity for a characteristic remark about Bunyan. "He was certainly a thorough Protestant, and that may mean a thorough individualist, but quite certainly that is not the reason why his book is so universally beloved." All this is unneeded and beside the point. There are a number of digressions which have not a very intimate bearing on the life of Bunyan, but serve to indicate the writer's interest in a variety of subjects. On the whole, it is regrettable that a prominent Churchman of the twentieth century should write an account of a Puritan author of the sixteenth century with so little sympathy and toleration.

---

Mr. J. R. Clark Hall has written a book which will appeal to all Evangelical Churchmen: *Is Our Christianity a Failure?* (Marshall Brothers Ltd., 3s. 6d. net.) If any criticism may be offered, it would be as to the choice of the title. It is unpopular now even to suggest that Christianity has failed, as so much has been said on the subject; and the usefulness of this book may be marred by being placed in the category of works that have since the War emphasized the defects of the Churches. But Mr. Clark Hall's book has a positive character and contains many valuable suggestions for the strengthening of Christian power in the coming age. Although all the Christian communions contain members who are examples of high Christian virtue and purity of living, yet he is convinced that "the success of a Church as a corporate body depends not only on the virtues of its members, but also on the purity of its doctrine." He examines Roman Catholicism and shows its weaknesses, especially in countries where it is in the ascendancy. The endeavour to combine Anglo-Catholicism and Protestantism in our own Church

must be a failure, as one or other must in the long run prevail. Anglo-Catholicism has altered the character of our Church, and yet, from a spiritual point of view, it has failed. After fifty years of its work, and more particularly in London where it has been specially favoured by the present Bishop for quarter of a century, the late Bishop Weston of Zanzibar, at an Anglo-Catholic Congress in 1923, expressed the opinion that London was more pagan than Zanzibar. He says further: "It cannot be maintained that commercial ethics, or the morals of society, or the respect for law and order are on a higher level now than in the times when we had no Church claiming infallibility or offering the other great spiritual advantages which Anglo-Catholicism professes to give to its adherents." In fact, the theory of mental reservation and intellectual dishonesty, sometimes perhaps unconscious, have lowered the standards of morality in several directions. There has been a growing tendency on the part of the Bishops to favour the Anglo-Catholic party and to give Evangelicals the cold shoulder. "Episcopal preferment in certain dioceses seems to be reserved almost exclusively for Anglo-Catholic priests, infraction of the law of the Church of England not being considered a bar to promotion, while clergymen who continue the practice of Evening Communion, or still worse, who introduce it, are severely left alone." He is quite frank about the failures of Protestants. With the highest form of Christianity they do not live up to their beliefs. They lack brotherliness. Some of the unloveliness of the Roundhead clings to them. They underestimate the present life in their emphasis on the life to come. He quotes Canon Baines: "There is nothing so dead in the whole religious world as a dead Evangelical; others have various paraphernalia wherewith to retain a semblance of life; we have not." Among the useful suggestions which he makes for the advancement of Evangelical interests is one of special importance—the providing of convalescent homes and similar institutions where their own people could be treated amid religious surroundings similar to those to which they have been accustomed in their own homes. On the intellectual side Evangelicals must take a far greater and more intelligent interest in matters of doctrine. Many of them are strangely uninformed with regard to these matters. Much more must be done to provide for the education of Evangelical candidates for ordination. There are many other important matters dealt with by Mr. Clark Hall; but, as I hope all my readers will study and take to heart his valuable criticisms and suggestions, I must be content to pass over his useful notes on eucharistic doctrine, and his estimate of the revised Prayer Book, and will close with a mention of his defence of Evangelical Churchpeople from the charge of being partisans and extremists. It is the members of the Episcopate who have changed their views about matters such as reservation within the last twenty years; and, when Bishops call us and the Romanizers extremists, the term may be justified in regard to the latter, as they have moved farthest away from the old standards of worship; but it is quite unfair to call those extremists who have simply continued to adhere to those

standards, or who have adopted some of the practices of the Oxford School which seemed to conduce to reverence of worship. As to partisanship, "it is not an evil in itself, except in persons in certain positions such as that of a bishop or a judge; it is a positive virtue compared with the mugwumpery of the indifferent."

I had intended to deal at some length with Mr. Fitzgerald's interesting life of Bishop Ryle. (*A Memoir of Herbert Edward Ryle*, K.G.V.O., D.D., sometime Bishop of Winchester and Dean of Westminster, by the Rev. Maurice H. Fitzgerald, with an Appreciation by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. Macmillan & Co., 15s. net.) The volume has, however, been so extensively and so favourably reviewed that it is not necessary to do more than to commend it to my readers as the biography of a Bishop who had an influential share in the life of the Church during a period of special importance. The Archbishop refers to him as "pre-eminent in lucidity of quiet thoughtfulness and Christian common sense." His genuineness as a Christian, his scholarship, his humility, his gifts as a teacher, and his power of making and keeping friends, are all brought out in this volume. His devotion to his father, the great Bishop of Liverpool, is recorded; and, although he did not follow his father's lines as a strong Evangelical Churchman, he was always on the side of the Reformation and used his influence to support the principles of the Reformers. Like many others, in his later years he adopted the policy of seeking to find some line of compromise with the advanced school, and did not realize the impossibility of working with men who have deliberately set themselves to undo the work of the Reformation. The definite line which he took in regard to illegalities on his appointment to Winchester is condemned, but the Church would be in a happier condition to-day if the other Bishops had followed his lead and had adopted his policy. The failure of his health cut short his major activities as a Bishop and arouses sympathy, but Westminster proved a niche where his energies found appropriate scope.

The Rev. Alfred Thomas, M.A., F.R.S.L., Vicar of St. Barnabas', Newcastle-on-Tyne, has published a volume of vigorous and striking addresses on some of the most urgent questions of the day under the title *The New Paganism and Other Present-Day Perils and Problems* (Robert Scott, 3s. 6d. net). Dr. Stuart Holden in an appreciative Foreword speaks of Mr. Thomas in enthusiastic terms: "The gifted author of these pages is a man with a message, and a man in downright earnest in regard to those vital things in belief and behaviour upon recognition of which the well-being of the Nation depends. While his heart is fixed as to his personal convictions and determinations, his mind is open, alert, discriminating in its observations of life." Mr. Thomas deserves this commendation, for he exhibits courage and clearness in the denouncing of some of the worst evils from which our land is suffering at the present time. The mad lust for pleasure, the craving for material posses-

sions, immodesty in dress, drink, gambling and impurity, are shown up in their disastrous effects. The cause of peace appeals strongly to him, and he has some pertinent things to say on the duty of supporting the organizations which have for their object the prevention of war. On the drink traffic and the Sunday question he is as equally outspoken. "The present disregard of the Sunday dates noticeably to the arrival of the bicycle and the motor-car, more especially to the latter. The richer members of the community by reason of their Sunday motoring, golf and tennis have set an unworthy example, and those lower in the social scale, as always have not been slow in following suit." It is those who have leisure to play games on weekdays who are the worst offenders in the turning of Sunday into a day of pleasure. The working man realizes what it means for his class if the Sunday is devoted to amusements. It means employment seven days a week. A sermon on "Rotary and the Radiant Life" shows the width of Mr. Thomas's interests. He is in touch with many aspects of the life of the busy northern town where he lives and where he has worked so devotedly for many years. Many will find his broadcast address on "The Duty and Privileges of Church-going" very useful. It brushes away the subterfuges by which members strive to excuse their absence from worship, and shows the responsibility and duty that rests upon Christian people of regular attendance at Church. The last address on the reunion of the Churches is a fitting conclusion to a volume that is marked by definiteness of view and strong, sensible arguments in defence of the Christian attitude in some of the familiar situations which we have all to face in life.

---

The *Pilgrim's Progress* has been found to lend itself to dramatic presentation, and many of its lessons may be enforced by securing a number of young people to take the various parts. Messrs. George Allen and Unwin published a Dramatised Version of Certain Scenes set out in the actual words of Bunyan. This version has been arranged by Mr. Wilton Rix (Paper, 2s. ; Cloth, 3s.) and it has already proved its effectiveness in a presentation at a Christmas Festival in his Church at Ealing. Mr. Rix says that the work "lends itself naturally to be made into a play and pageant, for it is written in that form." Adequate instructions are given as to the dress of the characters, the space required and the various entrances and exits of the performers, together with the words of the hymns and psalms sung during the proceedings. It is a complete guide for any who may wish to make a fruitful venture.

G. F. I.